

Wisborough Green Parish Council

Draft Minutes of the Finance Committee

Date: Wednesday 9th November 2016

Present: Mr K Charman (KC), Mr A Jackson (AJ) Planning Chairman, Mr M Newell (MN),
Mr H True (HT)

Apologies: Mr A Burbridge (AB)

Held in: The Committee Room, Village Hall

Members of Public: None

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.00 pm.

1. Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Burbridge.
2. Declaration of Members' Interests: No interests were declared.
3. Minutes of the Last Meeting: The minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 23rd August 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
4. Public Participation: There were no members of public present.
4. Current Expenditure and Budget Position to Date: The actual expenditure against budget report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and displayed. The Clerk highlighted that the only change since presentation of the figures at the October Parish Council meeting related to the Workhouse refurbishment and playground loan repayments. The current bank balances were noted.
5. 2017/2018 Budget: A report detailing the budget, expenditure to date and estimated year-end position for all budget headings was circulated in advance of the meeting and displayed. Before considering next year's budget, each budget heading for this year was considered and explanation given for anticipated year-end figures. The increased legal costs were noted. The year-end reserve balances and anticipated bank balances were reviewed. Members were happy that the current forecast would be in line with the budget but were mindful that the Parish Council should not authorise high unbudgeted expenditure at this stage. Explanation to the reserve funds was given; the Clerk highlighted that the Youth Club, Playground and Watershed were restricted for these purposes only.

Before considering the 2017/2018 budget, a chart showing 5 Year Objectives was displayed; it included projects identified through the Neighbourhood Plan process as well as recently identified maintenance items. The plan would be discussed at next week's Parish Council meeting, but would hopefully help with future budgets.

Members then considered the 2017/2018 budget. Each budget heading was reviewed and explanation of anticipated income and expenditure given by the Clerk.

Income: The following comments were noted:

- Allotments: Members agreed with the proposed incremental rent increase to provide a contribution towards the hedge cutting.
- Annual Fair: Agreed not to increase the Fair's charge in light of potential relocation to north end of the Green.
- Village Hall Donations: The Parish Council currently received a contribution towards the bin emptying cost and Broadband. As the Youth Club was no longer operating, the Parish Council was the main user of the Broadband being a requirement to review planning applications at meetings. As such, it was agreed that the Parish Council should pick up the full cost. The Clerk to enquire from CDC if the Village Hall could be invoiced directly for the bin provision.
- From Reserves: Noted that the amount related to the playground loan; this would then close the reserve account so future payments would need to be included in the budget.

- Precept: Had been increased substantially last year and as such, was set at the current rate for budgeting purposes – to be confirmed by Full Council.
- Workhouse: A budget figure for the increased Lease payment from the Village Hall Management Committee had been included as it was hoped that the legal position and arrangements would be resolved next year.

Expenditure: Explanation given by the Clerk for the included figures. The following was noted:

- Admin: The current year's budget included £1200 for a new website. A further £500 allowance had also been included next year in addition to the usual £1000 figure. The Clerk hoped to progress the website in this financial year but was waiting for a specification from Cllr Drummond.
- Audit: The previous internal auditor had now retired and as such, it was likely that the internal audit fee would increase.
- Clerk's Salary: To be reviewed later in the meeting.
- Legal & Professional Fees: Further allowance for Village Hall. It was noted that the Village Hall reserve could be used for this purpose if other pressing projects made the budget tight.
- Allotment Maintenance: It was agreed that the Parish Council should assume responsibility for the top and outside hedge cutting on an annual basis. Anticipated cost £400 this year with slight reduction on subsequent years.
- Village Hall: Agreed no further contribution to reserve.
- Workhouse Loan Repayment: Noted that the Village Hall reserve could be used.
- CDC Litter Collection: Included bins at the Pavilion and Village Hall as well as the dog and litter bins. It was noted that if a further dog bin was installed on the Green, this would incur an annual emptying charge of just over £300 at the current rate. To be considered by the Parish Council next week.
- Grass Cutting: A quotation for next year had been requested. 3% increase on this year included for budgeting purposes.
- Green Maintenance and Litter Warden: In line with this year.
- Path Maintenance: A sum of £5000 was included under Other Projects to potentially address some path restoration/improvement but subject to further quotations and Parish Council approval.
- Pond: Agreed that the regular maintenance regime should be continued as the appearance had improved considerably.
- Public Toilets: The cleaning contractor advised that the charge would not increase next year. Agreed that provision should be made to have additional weekend cleans from June to the end of September – the trial in August and September this year had worked well. Clerk to double check budget provision.
- Other Projects: Agreed to include a budget figure of £5000 to address maintenance objectives. Exact projects to be confirmed at a later date. It was noted that the Precept had been increased last year to help address these outstanding items.
- Playground Projects: Loan repayment noted. No other projects or maintenance requirements anticipated.
- Projects on the Green: The Clerk would see if the old notice board could be fixed but provision made to replace. Grant funding was a possibility.
- Projects using Reserve: Balance of playground loan repayment to reduce account balance to zero.

Net Income: Although a positive figure, this was based upon receipt of payment from the Village Hall. It was agreed that the use of the Village Hall reserve could be used to ensure that community projects were still addressed.

It was agreed that the budget, as tabled and adjusted above, should be presented to the Parish Council next week for further consideration.

7. Date of Next Meeting: Full Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 15th November 2016. Finance Committee meeting to be arranged in 2017 – date to be confirmed.

Part 1 of the meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Exclusion of Press and Public: Pursuant to Standing Orders Section 3d, and in accordance with Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, it was resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

8. Clerk's Appraisal and Salary Review: KC, Parish Council Chairman, had undertaken the Clerk's annual appraisal earlier in the day having previously circulated notice to members. He explained that the Clerk's current hours worked per week were increased from 18 to 24 from 1st August 2015. Since then, the Clerk had been maintaining a record which demonstrated that whilst there were peaks and troughs, the overall average was correct. The increase in hours very much reflected the changing times for Parish Council work.

In terms of the hourly rate, this had not been addressed since 1st November 2012 when a 2.5% increase was given increasing the rate to £11.838 per hour. The Clerk had previously been paid on the SCP 26 rate, but this had now fallen behind. The latest National Salary Award notice from NALC stated that the SCP 26 rate from 1st April (to be backdated) was £12.041. In December 2014, the Clerk was paid a one-off payment in recognition of the extra hours worked on the Neighbourhood Plan. KC advised that the hourly rate had previously been discussed with the Clerk but due to other pressures, had not been tabled by the Clerk.

The Clerk had confirmed to the Chairman that she was happy with the work and that the hours worked per week was, in her opinion, correct. In terms of the hourly rate, she did feel that she was no longer being compensated for the responsibility given to her, particularly as she offered flexibility in her working hours, being prepared to work the hours per week that were required at the time. The Clerk then left the meeting room to allow members to discuss in detail.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Signed by the Chairman: Date: